Reply to Roger Latham:

The camera crew did film the corn fields planted for the geese, the ponds and the management activities, and the film was used. Apparently you werent' watching at the time. The narration used with those film segments dealt with the hunter's role in conservation and the need for management, as well as a description of the Pymatuning operation. To refresh your memory, the script explained: "This is a management area for waterfowl in Pymatuning, Pennsylvania. The state game department created a premanent home for thousands of ducks and geese raised here. It is also a feeding ground for thousands more migrating south each year . . . and a hunting ground for the Pennsylvania sportsman. In autumn, there are estimated to be forty-thousand ducks and geese in Pymatuning. Management works."

There were some management practices we didn't mention: The fact that the shooting in the controlled areas is restricted to Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, as the Game Commission explains: "This leaves every afternoon and three days for geese to feed unmolested. Consequently, they stay in the area longer." (The Pymatuning Story, published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.) About the corn you mentioned, we also neglected to point out the harvesting procedures. At specified intervals eight rows of corn are left standing so that the geese feel secure enough to land and feed and the hunters have a natural blind.

You seem upset by the mention of the limit at Pymatuning. Strange, because the Game Commission considers it to be something of note: "To provide more sport to more hunters, the federal limit of two geese is further reduced in this county (Crawford) to one goose." If you don't like the limit, perhaps it would be better if you registered your complaint with the Game Commission rather than with CBS News.

In regard to the shooting starting a half hour before the legal starting time, it happened that way, as anyone who was there, as you were not, would be able to tell you. It is curious that you argue that it just couldn't be true because of game protectors breathing down a hunter's neck every minute. Is it only the fear of getting caught that keeps a hunter from shooting before starting time?

You might be interested in the experience reported by a Michigan waterfowler in November 1975. He had been upset by the broadcast, but later reconsidered his views. He reported what happened when he went hunting at Lake St. Clair: "We approached our duck blind at 6:30 a.m.; absolute darkness prevailed. The legal shooting hours were 7:45 a.m. to 7 p.m. In the darkness we could not believe the shooting that was going on one hour and 15 minutes before the legal hour." Perhaps you might want to suggest that Michigan hire more game protectors.

There were no "special" shots; no one was talked into performing in any way. The particular incidents cited in your article happened exactly as depicted in the broadcast.

You are right about one thing, though, Open garbage dumps are illegal in Michigan. We never said anything about the legality of garbage dumps. The subject of the broadcast was not waste disposal. We did say that it is not against the law in Michigan to shoot bears in a dump. The hunters at the dump were not discouraged in any way by the Department of Natural Resources official who was at the scene when the filming was taking place. He did make sure the hunters understood just what the legal starting time was.

You seem upset by the inclusion of the segment of bear hunting with dogs. You aver that that is uncommon. Perhaps you ought to talk to Mr. Ben East. You recognize

the name -- he's one of the co-plaintiffs in the MUCC suit. He was one of our sources for background information regarding bear hunting. According to this dean of Michigan outdoor writers (as you characterize him): " . . . a few states with a substantial bear population (New York among them, with a plentiful supply in the Adirondacks) continue to prohibit the use of dogs in hunting bears. Repeated attempts to legalize that method have failed, blocked by worried deer hunters who argue, honestly but mistakenly, that bear hounds would run all the deer out of the country." He continues: "Next to hunting with hounds, the most productive way to hunt the black bear is to bring him to the gun by baiting." (Check the Ben East Hunting Book for the full text.) Mr. Erwin Bauer, another name you should recognize, agrees with Mr. East "Next to hunting over bait, the most common method of pursuing black bears is with hounds, usually a pack of them." (North American Big Game Hunting) If you disagree with these men why don't you get in touch with them. While you're at it, you might also get in touch with Pierre Pulling, who wrote Game and the Gunner, published by Winchester Press. He reports that many places have no restrictions against chasing bears with hounds, and it's a practice he recommends.

You also bring up the question of states limiting the number of hunters who hunt together. The Pennsylvania big game regulations in force at the time the broadcast was in production do specify that no more than 25 hunters can hunt deer together at the same time. The regulations don't mention similar restrictions with regard to bear hunters. According to the script, there were 20-30 men involved in the bear hunt. Doesn't sound too different from Pennsylvania deer hunting. Or does it make a difference if the game is bear or deer?

The inference you draw from the inclusion of a sign advertising "License-Liquor-Ammunition" is a bit far-fetched. But if it concerns you greatly, perhaps you should start a campaign to prohibit anyone who sells hunting licenses and ammunition from

selling liquor, or vice versa. It's not too far-fetched to say that it probably wouldn't be a very popular campaign, except maybe in anti-hunting circles.

As to the old timer, he wasn't the only one who voiced the opinion that the deer herds had been subject to overkill. Several other hunters made the same statement. And the deer harvest statistics don't prove the old timer wrong, they prove him right. In the Salina-Richfield area, also known as Herd Unit 45, the record is: 1972: success ratio for 1,520 hunters was 77%; in 1973 the success ratio for 720 hunters was 50%; and in 1974 the success ratio for 927 hunters was 35%. We asked the state game department why they thought this had happened. They didn't deny the decline, and they did offer a reason. As we said in the script: "State game officials say that's because of an unusually severe winter the year before." So the old timer disagrees with the game department. Or are you suggesting that he doesn't have the right to disagree?

Come now, Mr. Latham, isn't it you who is more than a little embarrassed -- at your lack of accuracy, and your failure to substantiate any of your accusations and innuendos.

Taking Another Shot At

Great Outdoors

By Roger Latham
Outdoors Editor

It is anybody's guess how the $300 million lawsuit brought by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs against the Columbia Broadcasting System will be resolved.

But one thing sure, CBS knows by now that the hunters of this nation were insulted by the television film "Guns of Autumn." They were insulted, not only by the inferences contained in the film's strange depiction of hunting in America, but by the underhanded way in which CBS secured the footage.

At its last meeting in late March, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs sent a check to MUCC for $1000. Money is being donated by sportsmen's clubs and angry hunters from everywhere. Some time ago, $30,000 had been received at the Michigan organization's headquarters and more is arriving daily.

In April, U.S. District Court Judge Noel P. Fox of Grand Rapids issued an order allowing both sides to take depositions and to have 45 days after that to prepare for the beginning of the trial. Judge Fox ruled that CBS should not destroy any of the unused sound track involved in the production of the "documentary."

Sportsmen far and wide object to the term "documentary," since the film, according to them, depicted almost no "normal" hunting activities. Hunters accuse CBS of selecting only bizarre hunting situations, participated in by a comparative handful of individuals.

Co-plaintiffs with MUCC are five prominent Michigan outdoorsmen. These are: Rep. Thomas J. Anderson, Southgate, chairman of the House Conservation Committee; Carl T. Johnson, Cadillac, member of the station Natural Resources Commission; Fred Bear, Grayling, world-famed bowhunter; Ben East, Holly, dean of Michigan outdoor writers, and Thomas L. Washington, MUCC executive director.

As time goes on, more and more evidence comes to light about how game departments and individuals were duped, lied to, and made to look like fools.

The Pymatuning Goose Management Area sequence shot right here in Pennsylvania was typical of the whole unsavory procedure.

A girl made the original contact with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and told officials that CBS intended to make a hunting documentary. The camera crew took footage of the corn fields planted for the geese, the ponds, the nesting boxes and all the other management activites and devices and then never used a foot of this film.

In fact, I wonder whether there was

Outdoor Queries

2 thru 9 & PW $1.07 $1.03

'The Guns Of Autumn'

even film in the cameras!

The statement was made in the film that shooting started a half hour before shooting time. As anyone who has been lucky enough to have a permit for a goose blind at Pymatuning on the first day will tell you that this is just not true. There is a game protector breathing down your neck every minute.

And the film talked about the limit, as if this were some great thing. The limit is one goose per man. It would be difficult to have it lower than that!

There were "special" shots of a man stoning a crippled goose and another standing on the neck of another cripple. It must have taken quite a bit of glib talking to get the "actors" to perform this service. This in no way is normal hunter behavior.

Remember the bears at the garbage dump in Michigan?

First off, garbage dumps are illegal in Michigan. Second, garbage dump bears are extremely dangerous to foolish camera nuts and to others who attempt to feed them by hand. The U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the state park agencies try to discourage this in every way possible and consider a garbage dump bear a real nuisance.

Most states do not permit hunting bears with dogs. Most states do not permit more than a limited number of hunters to hunt together. And finally, any hunter who would shoot more than once at a bear in a tree is a mighty poor hunter.

In other words, the whole thing was obviously "staged." I cannot believe that real hunters would not compromise themselves before the camera in this manner.

The western deer hunt was next and practically nothing shown was normal.

A sign with the words "License Liquor - Ammunition" was evidently meant to infer that the hunter regularly mixes gunpowder and alcohol. They do not. In all my experience as a game protector and a hunter I have seen only one person out hunting who was obviously "alcohol happy."

Licenses are normally sold at sporting goods stores, county treasurer's offices and local offices of the various state wildlife agencies.

An investigation was made of the old timer who stated that the deer had all been killed off. The state's deer harvest figures would prove his statement to be false. Also, it was found that he had not been hunting for 12 years. Obviously, another "plant."

The lawyers and officers of MUCC are leaving no stone unturned and predictions are that the trial is going to be very interesting. They have talked to every principal in the film, every game department and the owner of the shooting preserve where the deer was shot repeatedly with a .22 pistol.

There is every reason to believe that CBS is going to be more than a little embarrassed!

and who has ... Rambling Afield

TV ethics gamey at best

"SEEING is believing" is a truism that seems to have gone out the window when TV news slithered in. What you see is not always what really happened.

And it's not just one TV station that's guilty. As we all know NBC recently was caught phonying a TV documentary to show how Chevy trucks explode when smacked broadside. To produce the effects they wanted, the station's producers installed a sparking device to make sure it exploded and burned.

HUNTING
JERRY KENNEY

Those of us who hunt and do anything legitimately with guns wonder what's so unusual about that. We've been the object of TV set-ups for so long it is almost to be expected.

How many times have we seen on TV news rafts of dead fish that were caused allegedly "by campers polluting streams."

Viewers with good memories may have recognized the same dead-fish scene from a previous "expose" when it was loggers who were to blame. Or another time when it was recreational boaters. Or simply a sewer overflowing because of heavy rains. Dead fish are dead fish, right ?

Those are simple every day "canned" film clips that are dredged up whenever dead fish are needed to convince a gullible audience. It's phony.

How many times have we seen so-called "documentaries" on hunting when the subjects were actually poachers involved in illegal killing of animals?

Hunters have been stung many times by TV producers who explained that they wanted "to show the hunters' side of the story."

We know what winds up on TV.

The now infamous "Guns Of Autumn" was phony from beginning to end. What the TV people did there was no different from the exploding Chevy episode. Only this time someone — General Motors — had the money, the time and obligation to take NBC to the mat.

This time NBC was exposed as the fraud. It tells us what TV is all about. Or, what it's not about — ethics. Most TV stations are good at creating scenes that will prove "a picture is worth a thousand words."

A Midwest TV crew showed a bunch of teens guzzling beer, proof that they were a roudy bunch of no-goods. But it came out that the beer was provided by the TV crew.

Newspaper reporters covering volatile events will tell you how the TV guys often create the riots they tape. It's the old drive for ratings in its slimiest form. This is their professional standard.

They show crowds that don't exist. They show riots that they themselves have created.

I always thought those who make a living in recreational fishing in the New York metropolitan area have a good case against TV stations for the often inaccurate weather forecasts.

The folks in the recreational fishing business rely almost entirely on favorable weather to attract customers. But the TV weather swamies who often can't predict tomorrow's weather today regularly predict dreary forecasts a week in advance.

When Freddy Forecaster says Monday it looks like rain next weekend, a couple of thousand fishermen cancel out.

It turns out sunny but the charter and party boat fishermen wind up sitting at the dock because everyone listened to the forecaster.

Maybe you can't do anything about the weather but you sure can do something about the weatherman.

They claim weather forecasting is an inexact science. If that's the case, they should project a disclaimer before each weather program, something like: "Our forecast can be wrong and this past week they were wrong 50% of the time."

BUT I can be that accurate by checking the wind outside my house and calling my mother-in-law in Kansas City to see what weather's she's having out there. At least 50% of the time, the K.C. weather arrives here 36 hours later.

Do any of the weather prognosticators want her number?